

BLUES RACE ON TOWARDS THE FIRST ROUND

FROM the very first minute of Saturday's F.A. Cup third qualifying round tie at Chesham to the last, Wycombe Wanderers held an iron grip over their opponents. Superior in every department, the Blues now have one further hurdle to overcome before entering the first round proper where they could face Football League opposition for the second successive year.

It is a long time since Chesham, who play in a Division lower to Wycombe in the Rothmans Isthmian League, have overcome their local rivals. In the past they have proved extremely troublesome, but this time they were seldom in the contest.

Overall, United were disappointing. I expected more skill from a side who topped Division Two this season. Full credit, though, must go to Wanderers for not allowing their opponents to get going.

The Blues, who fielded the same team that beat Leatherhead on Tuesday, had Chesham on the rack from the start with excellent running and passing. And had their finishing been more accurate it could easily have been six or seven instead of three goals.

Given more time and space than they normally expect, the front runners had a field day. Keith Searle looked at his sharpest and dominated the aerial duels with the over-worked Tom Johnston while Tony Horseman and Steve Perrin threatened every time they were in possession.

They were well served from the midfield trio who overcame United's hard tackling and set up penetrating attacks. Terry Reardon was the pick of them, laying some really superb passes through the home defence.

With these two spheres of the game well and truly under control, the Wycombe defence had things very much their own way. Both full backs had time to overlap and join the attack while the middle two looked as safe as houses. Special mention should be made of Gary Hand. Since he came to Wycombe he has hardly put a foot wrong and Saturday was no exception. Rarely beaten in the tackle, Hand is becoming the club's most consistent defender.

By **STUART EARP** Chesham U. 1, Wycombe W. 3

With every member of the side 'on song' poor Chesham made little headway. Only one man — Alf Cameron — looked on a par with the opponents while the top scoring Stewart Atkins was never allowed to shine.

Wanderers demonstrated their intention from the kick-off. Keith Mead's long ball to the flank found Searle who took the ball to the bye-line and crossed dangerously, but no-one was there to knock the ball home. Two minutes later Hand got in another curling cross but 'keeper Bob Taylor resisted Perrin's challenge to grab the ball in the nick of time.

The early pressure continued. Taylor could only parry Horseman's long range drive in the 12th minute and then Searle turned Johnston brilliantly only to see his cross cut out by Taylor as Horseman lunged in vain. It was 20 minutes before United tested the visiting defence but a last ditch tackle by Hand robbed Atkins.

Wycombe's pressure was rewarded in the 24th minute. It all started with a Horseman free kick after Gordon Taylor had brought down Hollifield just outside the area. Goalkeeper Taylor fumbled the ball, Searle crashed in a shot which Johnston cleared off the line. Hollifield drove in the rebound but straight at Taylor and finally Terry Reardon forced the ball

home for his first goal of the season.

Sixty seconds later only a brilliant save by Taylor robbed Perrin and then Horseman nodded Paul Birdseye's deep cross over the top.

Chesham were just not marking tightly enough. They gave their opponents far too much room and were paying the penalty.

In the 10 minutes before half-time, the Blues forced five corners but could not add to their tally. Searle hit the upright with a powerful header and the rebound fell to Mead whose chip was palmed away for another flag kick.

Atkins broke up the Wycombe monotony with a run from half way into the visitors' penalty area but the cross was too close to John Maskell, who gathered easily.

Chesham brought on Chris Wilkins for the inexperienced Mark Stedman at the start of the

new half with Bobby Peck moving to full back. The switch brought little change and with only four minutes played, Wanderers were handed a free gift to go two up.

Kennedy fired a free kick into the defensive wall, which rebounded out to Reardon. At first it seemed Terry's curling pass to the far post had gone out of play and the only man to follow the move through was Keith Mead. His endeavour was rewarded. Taylor slipped as he came out to collect and Mead, finding himself with the ball on the bye-line, took seemingly ages to pull it back and slot home his second goal in two games.

That piece of Chesham charity virtually ended the match as a contest. To their credit, however, Wycombe kept up the pressure and seldom relaxed their grip.

United came back with two corners when Bernie Mapp's drive was deflected and from the

second flag kick, Hand cleared off the line from Peck. Wycombe's reply was instant. Horseman drove in a hard shot which Taylor managed to parry and then, from a Birdseye cross, 'Bodger' fired just over the top.

Maintaining the onslaught, Wanderers created chance after chance during this spell with Hollifield, Searle, Perrin and Horseman all going close. It was clearly apparent that the Blues were in a different class to United who had virtually nothing to offer upfront or in midfield.

They turned their superiority into a third goal in the 78 minutes. Keith Searle was the scorer — a deserved goal for an excellent performance. Perrin beat Peck on the flank before taking the ball to the line and crossing short to Kennedy. Howard's shot was not truly hit but provided a perfect pass for Searle to knock the ball home at the far post.

Chesham, who fought back

well after the third goal, retaliated immediately when from a corner by Taylor, Wycombe failed to clear a hectic scramble in the goalmouth and Johnston thumped the ball into the net to make it 3-1.

Referee Daryll Reeves booked Peck for scything down Perrin seven minutes from the end and soon afterwards awarded Chesham a free kick inside the visitors' area after having words with John Maskell. United looked their most dangerous in the closing stages but the final whistle was blown just after Taylor had produced another fine save at Horseman's feet, typifying Wycombe's dominance.

CHESHAM: R. Taylor, M. Stedman (sub C. Wilkins 45 mins.), D. Le Sage, T. Johnston, K. Gregory, G. Taylor, R. Peck, A. Cameron, S. Atkins, R. Grimmond, B. Mapp.

WYCOMBE: J. Maskell, P. Birdseye, K. Mead, A. Phillips, G. Hand, H. Kennedy, T. Reardon, M. Hollifield, A. Horseman, K. Searle, S. Perrin. Sub. G. Mackenzie (not used).

Referee: D. Reeves (New Denham).
Half time: 1-0. **Goalscorers,** Wycombe — Reardon (24), Mead (49), Searle (78). **Chesham** — Johnston (79).

Approximate total attendance: 1,800.